



Public Notice

U.S. Army Corps Of Engineers Galveston District	Permit Application No: _____	SWG-2012-00993
	Date Issued: _____	11 December 2012
	Comments Due: _____	18 January 2013

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, GALVESTON DISTRICT
AND
TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

PURPOSE OF PUBLIC NOTICE: To inform you of a proposal for work in which you might be interested. It is also to solicit your comments and information to better enable us to make a reasonable decision on factors affecting the public interest. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is not the entity proposing or performing the proposed work, nor has the Corps taken a position, in favor or against the proposed work.

AUTHORITY: This application will be reviewed pursuant to Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

APPLICANT/SPONSOR: Pierce Ranch
354 Barrio Road
Wharton, Texas 77488

AGENT: Berg♦Oliver Associates, Inc.
14701 St. Mary's Lane, Suite 400
Houston, Texas 77079-2932
POC: David Sherrill
Phone: 281-589-0898
Email: dsherrill@BergOliver.com

LOCATION: The proposed project site is located on a 1,368-acre tract along the west bank of the Colorado River, within the historic Pierce Ranch, in Wharton County, Texas. Specifically, the site is located on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5 minute quadrangle: LANE CITY, Texas at Latitude 29.186106° N, and Longitude -96.094026° W (see map attached).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Sponsor has requested authorization to create a commercial wetlands mitigation bank, named the Pierce Ranch Mitigation Bank (PRMB), within the Galveston District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). As proposed, the PRMB would be created as a large-scale wetland and stream complex available for regional compensation to be managed and maintained in perpetuity.

The purpose of the PRMB will be to provide an effective approach to satisfy compensatory mitigation requirements of the Corps Regulatory Program developed in accordance with the Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources (73 Fed. Reg. 19594, 10 April 2008 (codified in 33 CFR 332)). A Mitigation Banking Instrument (MBI) would be developed following the aforementioned policy and will detail the legal and physical characteristics of the bank and how the bank would be established and operated. Subjects addressed in detail in the MBI will include development of the site, service area, credit determination, financial assurances, scope of agreement, purpose and goals of the bank, baseline conditions, performance standards for restoration or enhancement activities, accounting procedures, monitoring and reporting, long-term maintenance and protection, and transfer of bank ownership or sponsorship. The applicant will be working with the Corps and other Federal and State resource agencies (the Interagency Review Team-IRT) in the development of the MBI.

The proposed service area includes Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 12090302 (Lower Colorado) within the same EPA Level III Eco-Region. The proposed secondary service area could include HUC's 12100102 (Navidad), 12100401 (Central Matagorda Bay), 12090201 (San Bernard), and 12090402 (East Matagorda Bay) within the same EPA Level III Eco-Region. Portions of Colorado, Austin, Matagorda, Brazoria, Fort Bend, Jackson, Lavaca, and Wharton County are included in the primary and/or secondary service areas. The PRMB is within the Western Gulf Coastal Plains Level III Ecoregion. The final, approved service area(s) will be defined within the MBI as evaluated by the IRT.

NOTES: This public notice is being issued based on information furnished by the applicant. This project information has not been verified by the Corps. As of the date of this Public Notice, the Corps has not yet verified a jurisdictional delineation.

A preliminary review of this application indicates that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. Since permit assessment is a continuing process, this preliminary determination will be changed if data or information brought forth in the coordination process is of a significant nature. Our evaluation will also follow the guidelines published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to Section 404 (b)(1) of the Clean Water Act (CWA).

OTHER AGENCY AUTHORIZATIONS:

Texas Coastal Zone consistency certification may be required. The applicant must state that the project is consistent with the Texas Coastal Management Program goals and policies and will be conducted in a manner consistent with said program.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) certification may be required. Concurrent with processing of this application, the TCEQ is reviewing this application under Section 401 of the CWA and in accordance with Title 30, Texas Administrative Code Section 279.1-13 to determine if the work would comply with State water quality standards.

By virtue of an agreement between the Corps and the TCEQ, this public notice is also issued for the purpose of advising all known interested persons that there is pending before the TCEQ a decision on water quality certification under such act. Any comments concerning this application may be submitted to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, 401 Coordinator, MSC-150, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas 78711-3087. The public comment period extends 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. A copy of the public notice with a description of work is made available for review in the TCEQ's Austin office. The complete application may be reviewed in the Corps office listed in this public notice. The TCEQ may conduct a public meeting to consider all comments concerning water quality if requested in writing. A request for a public meeting must contain the following information: the name, mailing address, application number, or other recognizable reference to the application, a brief description of the interest of the requester, or of persons represented by the requester; and a brief description of how the application, if granted would adversely affect such interest.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES: The Corps staff archaeologist will evaluate the bank site processed under this proposal and review the latest published version of the National Register of Historic Places, lists of properties determined eligible, and other sources of information. This will determine the current knowledge of the presence or absence of historic properties and the effects of the undertaking upon these properties.

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES: An evaluation will be conducted on the bank site processed under this proposal to determine if threatened and/or endangered species, or their critical habitat, will be affected by the proposed work. If necessary, consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and/or the National Marine Fisheries Service will be initiated to assess the effect on endangered species. Preliminary indications are that no known threatened and/or endangered species or their critical habitat will be affected by the proposed work.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT: This notice initiates the Essential Fish Habitat consultation requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Our initial determination is that the proposed action would not have a substantial adverse impact on Essential Fish Habitat or Federally-managed fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. Our final determination relative to project impacts and the need for mitigation measures is subject to review by and coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service.

PUBLIC INTEREST REVIEW FACTORS: This application will be reviewed in accordance with 33 CFR 320-332, the Regulatory Programs of the Corps, and other pertinent laws, regulations and executive orders. The decision whether to authorize this proposal will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefits, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments.

All factors, which may be relevant to the proposal, will be considered: among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shore erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

SOLICITATION OF COMMENTS: The Corps is soliciting comments from the public, Federal, State, and local agencies and officials, Indian tribes, and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

This public notice is being distributed to all known interested persons in order to assist in developing facts upon which a decision by the Corps may be based. For accuracy and completeness of the record, all data in support of or in opposition to the proposed work should be submitted in writing setting forth sufficient detail to furnish a clear understanding of the reasons for support or opposition.

PUBLIC HEARING: The purpose of a public hearing is to solicit additional information to assist in the evaluation of the proposed project. Prior to the close of the comment period, any person may make a written request for a public hearing, setting forth the particular reasons for the request. The District Engineer will determine if the reasons identified for holding a public hearing are sufficient to warrant that a public hearing be held. If a public hearing is warranted, all known interested persons will be notified of the time, date, and location.

CLOSE OF COMMENT PERIOD: All comments pertaining to this public notice must reach this office on or before **18 January 2013**. Extensions of the comment period may be granted for valid reasons provided a written request is received by the limiting date. **If no comments are received by that date, it will be considered that there are no objections.** Comments and requests for additional information should be submitted to:

Sam J. Watson
Regulatory Branch, CESWG-PE-RB
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
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Galveston, Texas 77553-1229
409-766-3946 Phone
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DISTRICT ENGINEER
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